

NEWS BRIEFING

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DoD Background Press Briefing
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Briefer: I'd like to spend a few minutes to let you know a little bit about the trip and what Secretary Perry's purpose and objectives for the trip are, and then go over a little bit of the itinerary for you if I could, and give you some analysis of what we think this trip should do for us and for the Chinese, and then I'll take whatever questions.

Basically, if you'll recall, in November of '93, almost exactly a year ago, we revived high level defense dialogue with the People's Republic of China. When former Secretary of Defense Chas Freeman went to China on the 1st of November 1993, he re-initiated a dialogue with the People's Liberation Army leadership. At that time he met with the Minister of National Defense, the Chief of General Staff, and also a very important person in China who is the military person on the standing committee of the Politburo, namely General Liu Hua Qing, who is also the 1st Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission. He also met with Secretary Freeman.

From that point on, we've had a few visits and exchanges. Under Secretary Wisner went with Secretary Christopher to China. Then, CINCPAC, Admiral Larson went. He, of course, was the first four star general to go to China since Tiananmen. Of course, Secretary Freeman was the first, most senior defense official that's gone to China since Tiananmen when he went. Then, General McPeak went to China just three weeks ago, and he was the first Service Chief to visit China since Tiananmen.

In between, in August of this year, we had General Su Hui Zi, who is the Senior Deputy Chief of General Staff for the PLA [People's Liberation Army]--who was the host, both for Assistant Secretary Freeman and Under Secretary Wisner--

came here on a return visit. Therefore, Secretary Perry's trip is another in this series of reengagements with the PLA.

So, what Secretary Perry hopes to accomplish in China is that, one, he wants to continue the process of reestablishing some mutual understanding and mutual trust with the PLA leadership. Second, he wants to--in the process of doing this--he wants to address some serious bilateral problems that we have with the Chinese. As the Secretary has said, he thinks there are some hard problems that need to be resolved with China, and many of these problems are in the security area, especially, in proliferation.

So, the United States Government made a decision that in order to address this problem, we've really got to talk to the People's Liberation Army, who has a significant voice in how Chinese policies are being formulated in these areas. It doesn't make sense to just have the State Department talk to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about proliferation, about North Korea or about some other problems--let me just stick to the bilateral ones for now--about bilateral problems that touch on proliferation or arms control or whatever. And yet not have the DoD be available there to talk with the PLA, which, I am sad to say, has a lot more influence in China than DoD does in the United States.

So, that was one channel that was formerly not available, and now it is available to us and we want to use it. Secretary Perry is a very good person to use this channel because he's well known to the Chinese, he's well respected, and his words, spoken in a frank way--we're fully confident--will be taken the right way, and actually push forward some of the bilateral problems that we still have.

By the way, I don't want to exclude human rights on this either. That is not a security problem, per se, but it is a problem that bounds the bilateral relationship, and anything that bounds the bilateral relationship will naturally bound the military relationship. Secretary Perry plans to discuss human rights with the Chinese leaders... Let them know this is something we Americans are extremely interested in, and it's part of our foreign policy, and we need to move forward in this area.

But again, Secretary Perry knows how to address the Chinese--how to talk to the Chinese--and I'm fully confident he'll say it in a way that will make imminent sense to everybody who's going to be there. Again, it's not a security problem, but yet the PLA, and the inner circles of the Chinese government, are sitting at the table. All decisions, all policies with respect to the United States and human rights, obviously, is a big part of the policy with respect to the United States. So, we would hope that the PLA would exert some sort of influence in a positive direction in this area.

The third thing he wants to do there is to discuss some urgent regional problems. As you know, of course, the North Korean nuclear issue has been boiling here for almost a year-and-a-half, two-years, or even more, considering their program status. The Geneva nuke talks are going on. It's very slow slogging, and it's something that we really need the Chinese assistance [in], in many ways. Not only if everything goes sour--that maybe sanctions are necessary some time in the future, then obviously, the Chinese role in the United Nations is a key one. The second Chinese role that we'll play is that it's a supply conduit to the North Koreans. If there is any sanctions to be imposed, Chinese behavior will be important not only in the UN but in practice.

The other thing is that if the negotiations in fact are making progress, then we're looking at a long term... As you know, of course, those of you who are familiar with the Korea issue, it's a very complicated negotiation going on in Geneva right now, having to do with the light water reactor. I don't want to divert myself to that area, but--all I'm saying is it's going to be a long-term engagement with the North Koreans to make anything happen. So during this long term process the Chinese influence and role is key.

Finally, on the North Korea issue, it's a firm belief on the part of the Department of Defense, that this North Korea issue is not a nuclear issue only, but it's really a "tension on the peninsula" issue. The conventional forces are arrayed against each other--have always been there even without the nuclear weapons program. So, reducing tension on the peninsula is, again, something that the Chinese can help us with. The reason they can help us is because they have--despite their protest to the contrary, they have the closest relationship with Pyongyang than anybody else, and in fact, the PLA is the only military that talks to the Korean People's Army. The Korean People's Army are the people who are the most conservative and ideological in all our negotiations with the North Koreans. So, what we want to do is talk to the PLA and discuss ways they can talk to the KPA, etc.

Again, why this military-to-military channel? I'll just give you an anecdote, here. When Admiral Larson went to China, he just briefly described to the Chinese Chief of General Staff some of the defensive measures that we were contemplating in South Korea. If you'll recall, at that time--it was right after Jimmy Carter's visit--we almost went to sanctions, and things were fairly tense on the peninsula. There were some moves that we made at that time.

Without going into any details, Admiral Larson basically told the Chinese Chief of General Staff that, "Look, we support negotiations, we support what former President Carter is doing, and we hope things don't go to sanctions, but you as a military commander have to understand that, as military commanders here--General Luck, Admiral Larson, General Shali--all of us in this business have to make sure that the defense capability is available in order to protect our troops,

protect the assets, and also to fulfill the obligations of the mutual security treaty with South Korea." So, he was speaking as a military man, and you could tell that the Chinese general understood that. As a military person, he knew that these measures, indeed, were defensive measures that we were taking, were not provocative despite what Foreign Ministry spokesmen had said, etc. So, again, this is another way for military people to talk to each other and use a special language and establish some confidence, etc. So, that's a third objective he has.

The fourth objective he has is what's called "Transparency." In other words, we want to go there and have a dialogue with the PLA on their defense strategy and planning; on their budget, which on paper has been increasing in double digit figures year by year. What is it that they plan to do? What are their modernization goals? What are their strategic intentions? What are their geo-strategic, geopolitical intentions? What about the Spratly Islands? What about their relationship with the Russians? Etc., etc.

What we're going to tell them is that the Chinese--by sheer size, and the largest army over there, and the nuclear power, and the historical dominance in Asia--affects the security of all the neighbors present, and therefore, it's subject to misperceptions by people. So, one way to dispel misperceptions, if indeed they don't have any designs in that direction, is to be more open about what they're doing on the defense side. Tell people what you're doing in modernization and what your intention is, rather than denying it through foreign ministry channels. Why not go out and publish something or be more open.

So what we're going to try to do is try to engage them in a dialogue, and Dr. Perry will obviously describe to them what our restructuring is doing in DoD, and how we're downsizing our missions, how they are today compared to five years ago, and hoping to elicit the same type of comments from the Chinese military.

So again, understanding their defense strategy, and making them understand us a little bit better. Basically, we want to put down this thesis that has been advanced by some people. It's never been official U.S. Government policy, but it's been advanced by a lot of people, either in scholarly circles or in the media, that somehow the U.S. considers China as a threat, or maybe China is considering the U.S. as a threat. Both of those are not something that we want, or are good for either of us. That's something we want to, hopefully through this kind of dialogue, sort of dispel.

Finally, he's going to go there and make some reacquaintance of the people he knew before, and talk about some ways to move ahead the military relationship that will be in keeping with what the Chinese want, and also in keeping with what we want, especially in consideration of the domestic consensus in the United States, and also in consideration of the political context that we live in. We tell the Chinese that over and over and over again. We cannot have a military relationship

in a vacuum. It has to survive in a political context. Therefore, we have to work together to make sure the political situation is healthy and so that we have the support of the American people and the American Congress. So he'll be discussing ways to try to move ahead in that direction cautiously.

One other thing I want to mention is that he will also be there to do a couple of things. One is to have a World War II commemoration event when he visits the Stillwell Institute in Chung Ching. He will participate in an activity to honor a general who was the head of the China/Burma/India theater back in World War II.

On Monday, the 17th, he will convene a Joint Defense Conversion Commission with the Chinese. Dr. Perry chaired that. This is a commission that was set up last year, but this is the very first meeting. The only thing I want to stress is this is a civilian cooperation program. Not the military program. Basically, it tries to sort of match-make Chinese defense enterprises which may be interested in producing civilian goods to U.S. businesses, who may be interested in using that facility or using that skill or using those people present, workers present, to do some civilian cooperative projects.

So that leads me to my last point. This defense conversion program is not a military program, it is not a military technology cooperation program, it is not a slippery slope to arms sales, and in fact, there are no arms sales. We have to repeat that ten times. There is no arms sale in the cards with the Chinese. That is not in this new military relationship that has been restarted. So there is no intention to go back to the same format that we had in the middle '80s where we did have arms sales being a key component of the military relationship. This military relationship now is basically, the emphasis is on dialogue and high level exchange of views, exchange of ideas to resolve all kinds of problems, and it also includes some professional interchanges of a very cautious and slow level. But it's not geared towards doing anything but in a military-to-military sense with some [of their] closer friends and allies, and it certainly does not include arms sales or military technology.

With that, I could open up. The only thing I want to mention is that he will go there. His counterpart, obviously, is the Minister of National Defense. He will be meeting with General Liu Hua Qing which I mentioned earlier. He will convene the Joint Defense Conversion Commission with Minister Ding. And he will be seeing the President, President [Jung do Ming] and he will be seeing the Vice Premier Foreign Minister [Chen Chi Jen]. He will also give a speech at the National Defense University in China, in Beijing, where there will be 300-some PLA generals present, so that's another good way to get our word across. He goes to [Chung Ching] and participates in that activity, and then he flies to Manila. That's three days of a very packed schedule in Beijing.

Q: I think you mentioned about [Li Pung].

A: The [Li Pung] appointment is being worked on right now.

Q: That's not sure yet?

A: The timing is not sure yet.

Q: Could you expand a bit on the point you said there will be some of these bilateral talks where he wants to discuss particularly proliferation. What exactly...

A: What he wants to do is to basically follow up on the agreement that was reached ten days ago between Vice Premier Foreign Minister Ching and Secretary Christopher. They reached an agreement where they addressed, in a limited way, the missile proliferation problem especially with respect to Pakistan.

This is a State Department negotiation, as you know, between them and (inaudible) and Dr. Perry is not going to go over there and negotiate anything. But what he will do is to go over there and discuss with the Chinese some of the -- and of course this is all fully coordinated -- some of the things that were not accomplished during that agreement. He will try to address those and...

Q: Which are?

A: One of the things, of course, is that they have, if you look at the agreement, they have committed to adhering to original NPCR guidelines which is now a few years old. So one of the things we would like the Chinese to do is to adhere to what we call current guidelines. The guidelines have been revised since that time. I don't want to go into details, but

Q: You're over my head here, so I guess I need to be a little more basic. What do you mean? Are they selling missiles to Pakistan?

A: No, they have said in the agreement that they will not export missiles of a certain category. But let's just say that the problem which we're still going to have to... There are still some loose ends. I don't want to go into more details.

Q: Can I ask you something about arms sales? Since the United States won't be selling arms and technology to China now, what's the status of China's purchasing MIG-29's and other things from the Russians? The MIG-29's are giving them kind of quantum leap, wouldn't they?

A: They have 26 SU-27's. They don't have any MIG-29's. There's a possibility of some follow-on contract with the Russians on the SU-27. But you understand, of course, that the Chinese way of procurement really hasn't changed in the last 10 or 15 years. They're still interested in just a few end items, and they're interested basically, because of the hugeness of their military. They're interested in production and production technology, technology transfer, etc. I think that's probably being discussed. But as of right now they only have 26 SU-27's from an air force that has 4,000 airplanes.

Q: Will Iraq come up at all?

A: Iraq will only come up, I think, in terms of we will be leaving tonight for the Middle East and then going eastward, so I'm sure the Secretary will brief his counterpart on what he's found there. Of course I'm sure there will be a discussion on how both sides, how the Chinese can help talk to Saddam if they do, and help the situation. But we're not at the stage, I suppose it gets to the stage of the UN, but the Chinese (inaudible).

Q: I'm assuming one of the topics the Chinese are interested in is our policy towards selling arms to Taiwan. Has that changed? Is there any policy we're articulating in this visit, or is it basically...

A: There will be no change in our Taiwan policy. There was a Taiwan policy review that was done and announced about three weeks ago. The Chinese protested strongly. But that is something that has been done, and is part of U.S. policy, and we feel that what we do with Taiwan is basically to try to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. And, in fact, that we do adhere to the communiques that we have with the Chinese. So there's no intention to make any changes or announce any changes or even enter in a discussion about it. But I'm sure the Chinese will, obviously they'll bring it up. Especially the arms sales part that you mentioned.

Q: In terms of military cooperation, do you think there's a possibility that you could come up with the Chinese joint military peacekeeping, joint exercise like the one that you are doing with the Russians? Also, when was the last time that an American Defense Secretary visited Beijing?

A: To answer your first question, when Assistant Secretary Freeman went there in November, one of the things that he did raise with the Chinese was to say that if there's some peacekeeping opportunities in the future, the Chinese may very well participate somewhere around the world. Because of this possibility, maybe the Chinese would contemplate doing some training exercises with us. This is for peacekeeping purposes, not for fighting purposes. And I'm talking about search and rescue and humanitarian type things. But of course the Chinese view has always been we prefer not to participate in peacekeeping outside our borders, and so there's really no need to be doing any of this stuff with you. So we haven't heard anything about that for a long time.

As for your second question, the last Secretary of Defense that went there was Frank Carlucci in the fall of 1988. So this is exactly six years.

Q: You mentioned that arms sales and sales of military technology were not on the table, but do you envision any sort of dual use technology from the U.S. being sold in the future to China?

A: That's a good question. Dual use technology, of course, are still being sold to the Chinese. So it isn't that we're going to start or stop or whatever. But your question, let me just answer it in the context of this Defense Conversion

Commission. Obviously, when this commission agrees on some cooperation, there may be a possibility of some technology that would have to be involved. After all, we're not talking about cooperating, making chairs or tables. There will be some things that may involve some technology. We have told the Chinese that if, in fact, some technology would be involved, this commission is not going to act as a big brother. In other words, technology transfer decisions will be made through normal technology transfer guidelines and channels. So if there's any dual use technology involved, it will be denied if it's above a certain level, and it will be approved if it's below a certain level. It won't be just because it's something the Defense Conversion Commission discussed doesn't necessarily mean that it will be blessed in that sense. So that's number one.

Number two, he is not going to go over there and offer any dual use technology or whatever. That is not in his agenda.

Q: What about non-dual use. Like commercial airplane sales. Is he carrying over for the American business community a list of companies that...

A: No. Ron Brown did a great job, so he is not going to supplement that, but he will have breakfast with the business community. In fact, tickets have been sold out for a couple of weeks. They have standing room only for the businessman's breakfast, who I'm sure will have a lot of questions about maybe some of the things that she asked, about technology, etc. But he's not going to take over any deals.

Q: What would we like to see in China's nuclear testing program? More transparency? What would our goals be there?

A: That's a very good question, a tough question. Their position has pretty much been that they will discuss the CTBT with us, and they will negotiate a test ban treaty, and in fact, they signed an agreement three weeks ago which was not publicized, is that they agreed to work with us to stop the production of fissile material. If you talk to some people, they think that's a bigger step forward than the missile agreement.

So they're heading, in general, in the right direction. The problem is that scientifically they are in the middle of a series of tests in a program of weapon design, safety, and modernization. I don't know how to answer that because I would like them to stop because it affects the moratorium and it affects people's attitude, it's highly unpopular. But I think they have sort of made a technical decision to go forward with these limited number of tests. Getting them to stop... We're going to talk about that. I think sooner or later they have to realize that the political perception and the political costs may outweigh the technical benefits of having these things. Maybe they can reduce the number of tests or maybe they can do more tests in the laboratory. I'm not a nuclear engineer, I don't know. But we will address that.

Q: What role does the congressional delegation play (inaudible), and who actually will be on it?

A: On the delegation are four senators -- Nunn, Inouye, Stevens, and Warner. They will be bringing their own staffers also. But these four senators basically will participate in the events in China. I'm glad you brought this up, because this is sort of unusual. When we told the Chinese, they said what is this? This is highly unusual, right? We said yes, it is highly unusual. It is because Dr. Perry really is a firm believer in this military relationship. He is a firm believer that good relations with the largest country in the world, with an army that is modernizing, and with intentions which we would like to discuss with, is in the American interest. So he wants to take these senators over there basically to have them sit in the meetings and participate -- not only observe, but actually participate in the dialogue. And he knows that there are some in Congress -- I don't think right now there's a majority, but there are some in Congress who are still uneasy about the military relationship, and Dr. Perry just feels this is a way to bring them in. The senators have been very enthusiastic. They have said they wanted to participate in everything. The programs are set up so this would be a very good program for them. The Ministry of National Defense, after we explained what the rationale is, stepped forward and agreed to host the senators... For those of you familiar with China, hosting is a very complicated issue because it involves who handles the visas, who pays for what, who gets the cars, who gets the lodging. It's bureaucratically very cumbersome. The Ministry of National Defense traditionally has never, ever, ever hosted [CODELS]. It's always been the Chinese People's Friendship Association or something that does that. So MND has taken upon themselves to do that because I think they also saw the purpose we articulated is a worthwhile one. So they have really bent over backwards to accommodate.

I think you have to realize a couple of things. One is that this is going to be a huge delegation. For those of you traveling with us, you'll probably miss the motorcade one time or another because it's going to be very complicated. The second thing is that some of these military guys we're meeting have never, ever, ever seen a senator before. That's going to be very interesting, because when [CODELS] go over there, they see the government leaders and then the military usually trots out one or two people who have been exposed to Westerners to meet with them. But in this case, there's going to be people across the table or on the couch next to you that have never, ever seen a live U.S. senator. So that's going to be a breakthrough in that sense.

Q: How big is this delegation? You talk about huge. Is this the biggest ever?

A: No, it's not the biggest ever. When Ronald Reagan went, I think he had 800. (Laughter)

Q: I'm talking about in terms of the Defense Secretary.

A: I don't want you to write an article saying this is a large delegation, this must mean... Just purely by logistics... The reason is if you have four senators and they have to bring their staff, if they bring their staff you have to bring legislative affairs people. So the tail just grows. Logistically, that's the way it happens. Not because we made a conscious decision to make a statement by having a large delegation. It's just the way it is. And also because the Defense Conversion Commission is an inter-agency commission. It's not a DoD commission. So there are going to be people from ACDA, people from Commerce, and there are people from State and people from NSC, so that's how the party grows. Not because we want to do anything special.

Q: Under what kind of circumstance the U.S. will resume its arms sales to China in the future, as the two Ministry's relations are getting better?

A: I personally don't see it for the near term. Frankly, I don't see the Chinese as being interested in that either. After Tiananmen, after we suspended the arms sales with China, if I were the Chinese I would be more ginger in stepping into another relationship, especially... They realize that I think a political relationship now is much more tenuous than the political relationship in 1985. So I just don't see that the Chinese will even raise this as a subject for the near term.

In addition, they have a good program going with the Russians, so for now anyway, I think they're fairly satisfied with their own source and with the fact that they don't want to touch this other source for awhile, because of past experience. So I do not expect the Chinese to bring up any arms sales issues for the near term, either.

Q: Why is the political relationship more tenuous now than it was in '85?

A: It just is. If you look at it optimistically, you could say this is the result of a mature relationship so that we have a lot of things going on with the Chinese. If you have a lot of things going on, you have a lot of problems. But on the other hand, I think it would be naive for anyone to say that we have a solid relationship which is so strong that it can withstand blows. I think it's still a tenuous relationship. There are human rights problems, proliferation problems, trade problems, and there are still people who have not forgotten about Tiananmen and want something beyond whatever they want to make up for it. But it's just that there are a lot of critics of China in the United States. Even though the economy has sort of over-shadowed some of this a bit because of the MFN decision and Secretary Brown's visit, but still, the basic problems are still there and must be addressed in order for the relationship to move forward. Just because we're having a defense relationship, it does not mean by any means that we're going to minimize these other problems. But on the contrary, we feel this is a way to provide another channel to address these other problems.

Q: Coming back to the nuclear test issue. You talk about decisions the Chinese made in going for the nuclear test, and you also talk about going forward

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for a limited number of tests. Do you have any idea how many tests they plan to have over what...

A: No. I don't have any details on that.

Press: Thank you.

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